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## Forever Fitness participants lose 109 pounds

By GAIL MAHOLICK [gmaholick@tnonline.com](mailto:gmaholick@tnonline.com)

For the 15 participants in the Forever Fitness 12-week program at Ladies Workout Express, it turned out to be a worthwhile use of their time. While the women came together to lose weight and inches, which they did, they also learned to eat nutritionally and gained the intangible benefits of a boosted morale, better flexibility and made some new friends.

In all they lost 218 inches and 109 pounds.

The program ended two weeks before Christmas, but the ladies said the holidays didn't interfere with their weight loss and fitness goals because that through the program, they had learned to change their eating and exercise patterns which they incorporated into their lifestyle.

"This was all about making lifestyle changes," said Cindy Sterling, an employee at the fitness center. Sterling believed that all of them could do it and she helped them along by cooking a nutritional meal for them every week.

"We all miss Cindy's cooking," said Louise Polk of Lehighton.

As part of the program, the women were required to fit in at least 30 minutes of exercise at the facility three times a week and participate in six weeks of educational nutritional seminars at the facility. They could engage in more visits if they wanted and were often coached on their menu choices and fitness goals.

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*Gail Maholick/TIMES NEWS*  
Participants in the 12-week Forever Fitness program at Ladies Workout Express were, from left, Cindy Sterling (kneeling), Pam Pauker, and Marie Massari, and back row, from left, Sandra Roth, Laurie McEvoy, Louise Polk, Kerry Verrastro, Linda McGrath and Robyn Blair.

"We kept our height," joked Polk, whose petite stature matched most of the other participants in the program. Polk said she joined the group because she is over 50 and wanted to keep the aches and pains away. "After two weeks I could feel the difference, no aches and pains," she said.

"At our age, we need to exercise to feel better," said Polk. "I figured that if I could do 12 weeks, I can keep doing it."

Pam Pauker says she has more energy. Pauker had a baby a year ago and wanted to be able to keep up with the baby's energy.

"I'm over 40 and having a baby at this age is harder," she said.

"They weren't here to simply lose weight," said Sterling. "They needed to learn lifestyle changes." Sterling also taught them the importance of drinking lots of water.

"We heard, 'water, water, water,' all the time," said Linda McGrath of Towamensing Trails. "I started out with a small bottle and graduated to a bigger bottle. I also learned a lot during our weekly nutrition seminars."

"Water is good for your skin and your hair," said co-owner Kerry Verrastro. "It is so important to be hydrated."

For Sandra Roth of Jim Thorpe, the 12-week program was good for her morale.

"I went through a tough year," said Roth. "I lost so many people close to me that I needed something to help my state of mind. Losing the weight was a bonus."

Roth also learned a lot about menu selection and became the most organized of the group by planning her menus each week and then shopping for her menu choices after reviewing them with Sterling.

"She actually kept a notebook," said Sterling. "This program was about learning to make better choices."

"It also helped with the stress and tension," said Roth. "

McGrath added that being enrolled in a program was like having a personal trainer.

"I've been a member of other fitness centers for years, but never had the results like I have had here," said McGrath. "I found I can't hurt myself here. You can't push yourself too much because this equipment was designed for ladies. Plus it was fun and effective."

For Robyn Blair of Lehighton, she no longer has to take medication for high blood pressure because the exercise brought it down to a normal range.

The program included women of all ages, from a woman in her 20s to one who had to drop out of the program midway to have open heart surgery.

"She is coming back," said Verrastro. "In fact, her doctor is advising that she exercise."

Ladies Fitness Express is located at 580 Coal St., Lehighton. See the Web site at [ladiesworkoutexpress.com](http://ladiesworkoutexpress.com), or call (610) 377-4008.

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